

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR (Magadan Oblast)
SUBJECT Prison Camps in the Lazo Area

REPORT

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Camp Lazo

1. It took three days and nights to travel by truck from Magadan (N 59-34, E 150-48) to Lazo (N 63-13, E 152-10). The address of Camp Lazo was P.Ya. (pochtovyy yashchik) 383/5.
2. In 1949, there were 1,500 to 1,600 inmates in the camp; but, in May 1953, only about 700 remained. The two largest groups in the camp were West Ukrainians and Balts. There were also many Poles, Germans, Austrians, and Rumanians. Other nationalities represented included 15 or 16 Hungarians, two Bulgarians, two Czechoslovaks, two Koreans, three Chinese, one Japanese, one Yugoslav, one Italian, and two Iranians. At the end of 1949, 40 Germans and Austrians were taken to a camp for foreigners in Irkutsk (N 52-16, E 104-20).
3. There were 12 barracks for the prisoners; each consisted of two sections which were connected by a narrow passage-way. There was a barrack for the cultural-educational section (KYCh), the storeroom, and the camp guards. Another barrack housed the dining hall, and there was a small barrack for the dispensary. The dispensary had only three beds, which were always occupied. Most of the serious cases of illness were taken to the hospital in the nearby camp of the Third Factory. The camp dispensary had one female doctor; a free worker who was the nurse; and two male, prisoner doctors, an Estonian and a Korean who later went to the central hospital at Seymchan (N 62-53, E 152-26).

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4. In August 1952, conditions were better in Camp Lazo than in 1950, primarily because, in 1952, political prisoners were paid for the work they were doing.

5. [redacted] in 1952-1953, the chief was Captain Blanov (fnu). [redacted]

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Third Factory Camp

6. The Third Factory Camp was located in the Lazo area. In 1950, there were more than 1,000 inmates in this camp; but, in 1953, only about 600 remained. The ethnic composition was the same as that in Camp Lazo, except that there were more Balts in the Third Factory Camp.

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7. The hospital in the Third Factory Camp was the largest in the area. It served the camp primarily, but it also took in free workers and criminal prisoners from other camps in the area. The hospital had 40-50 beds and was equipped with X-ray machines. Penicillin was available for the free workers and, in emergencies only, for the prisoners. Prisoners who worked in the Lazo mine were X-rayed every six months. The hospital had one free doctor and two prisoner doctors. One of the prisoner doctors was a Korean called "John" [redacted]

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[redacted] a Hungarian. Also in the hospital were dentists, two surgeons, two feldshery, and two male nurses, a Pole and a Hungarian. One of the surgeons was an Armenian whose name was Sergey (fnu). He was the best-known surgeon in the area. [redacted]

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[redacted] During World War II, he had served near Sevastopol as a senior lieutenant in a Caucasian division organized by the Germans. Normally, he was forbidden to travel; but, on the request of various camps, he received permission from Moscow to travel as far as Yagodnyy (N 62-33, E 149-40). This man was liberated with some Iranians in June 1953.

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Camp Gulikhari

8. Camp Gulikhari was a smaller camp, located 22 km northeast of Pyatiletka (N 62-18, E 151-27). In April 1951, this camp had about 360 political prisoners; later the number was reduced to only 140. Estonians made up a large proportion of the laborers in Camp Gulikhari. They were especially good at lumbering, which was the chief occupation of the camp inmates. The chief of this camp was Senior Lieutenant Palamarov (fnu) [redacted]

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Health and Sanitation

9. The most frequent diseases in the Lazo area were tuberculosis, silicosis, jaundice, and scurvy. There was little isolation for tuberculosis cases, although extreme cases were removed from the camp to a hospital. [redacted]

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[redacted] Doctors made glucose injections to cure jaundice. All prisoners were inoculated twice a year against dysentery and typhus. There was no malaria in the region, but from May to September there were many mosquitoes (komar) and gnats (moshka). During this period, prisoners were given mosquito masks, with gauze in front and cloth behind, for work in the woods and at night. There were many bed bugs (klop) in Kolyma. Clothing was disinfected by steam when prisoners took showers, which was normally once every ten days.

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10. There were many cases of amputation and self-mutilation. Frozen hands and noses were common; in Camp Lazo, two prisoners had to have their legs amputated. There were many cases of self-mutilation until 1952, when political prisoners began to be paid wages. Prisoners would give a comrade 300 grams of bread to have a finger cut off. In order to avoid work, others would pour water in their shoes and then have their feet amputated. Some breathed sugar to give themselves tuberculosis; others drank nicotine, which also affected the lungs. In the Vanino assembly center near Sovetskaya Gavan (N 48-58, E 140-18), some prisoners even blinded themselves to avoid being sent to the Kolyma region.

11. There were various pumping stations in Lazo for drawing up water from the wells. Water was transported to the camp in tank trucks. It was drunk without previous boiling. Garbage and fecal matters were thrown into the river or dumped there when it was frozen.

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Food

12. The kitchen in Camp Lazo had six big kettles, which held 300 to 500 liters, to cook the food. At Camp Gulikhari, prisoners ate three meals a day. One winter this camp was completely cut off, and food had to be supplied by air. Since flour was the principal item which was dropped, prisoners ate nothing but flour dissolved in water and some dried black bread for three days.
13. In 1953, the daily ration for miners was as follows:

Bread: 900 grams (workers outside the mine received 800 grams.)

Kasha: 150 grams.

Sugar: 27 grams (seven grams were withheld daily to make kvass.)

Cotton seed oil: 17 grams (no butter).

Meat: 28 grams.

Fish: 120 grams.

If a miner exceeded his work norm, he would receive, in addition to his regular ration, 200 grams of kasha, 100 grams of bread, and seven grams of oil. Daily meals for miners were as follows:

Morning: 400 grams of black bread, soup, salted fish, and 150 grams of tea with very little sugar.

Noon: Soup and 150 grams of kasha.

Evening: 500 grams of black bread, soup, and a fermented flour drink (drozh), which was like kvass.

Camp Culture

14. The camps had loudspeakers, which broadcasted Radio Moscow, Magadan, and Khabarovsk. 25X1
The standard Soviet publications were available to the workers. Dailies included Pravda, Izvestiya, Trud, Sovetskaya Kolyma, and a Magadan paper. Other publications were Krasnaya Zvezda, Literaturnaya Gazeta, Ogonek, and Krokodil. Most prisoners did not read these publications, since they were not interested in Soviet propaganda. The camps also had many Soviet and foreign films. The only American film [redacted] seen was "Tarzan"; [redacted] it was: 25X1
captured from a German ship. After 1952, the admission to movies was 2.50 rubles.

Slang Expressions

15. [redacted] slang expressions which were current among criminal prisoners. 25X1
They used groshi for money (dengi) and prekhariya for shoes (sapogi). A common saying about the Kolyma region was: "The bear is the attorney; the taiga is the law (prokurator medved; zakon tayga)". About a small heating stove, they would say among themselves: "A small Tashkent is better than a big Kolyma (malenkiy Tashkent luchshe, chem bol'shaya Kolyma)".

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